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STATINTL

Fulbright and the CIA

Although the super-secret Central Intelligence Agency is under scrutiny by a select committee of Congress, a move is under way to add representatives of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to that body.

The resolution to do that is being pressed by Sen. J. W. Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and is being strongly opposed by Sen. Richard Russell, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and also of the CIA "oversight" group which keeps tabs on the agency.

Sen. Fulbright holds that his committee should have a role in the supervision of the CIA because that agency "affects" foreign policy. Sen. Russell argues that the present committee does its job well and that too much supervision of the intelligence agency would hamper its operations.

Thus is the stage set for an interesting showdown between two powerful figures in the Senate. The resolution has been approved by the Foreign Relations Committee, but the real test will come on a floor motion by Sen. Russell to refer it to his own Armed Services Committee. If that takes places, the measure will die there.

At this point in American history, we must hope for a victory by Sen. Russell.

While the rules of conduct of the Senate prevent too broad a discussion of the matter, Sen. Fulbright,

by his performance in connection with hearings on policy in Viet Nam, seemingly has disqualified himself as a member of a committee with access to CIA secrets.

He is giving the appearance of a frustrated man who borders on the desperate when he can't make his points stick. He has been guilty of intemperate and uncalled-for remarks about the war effort.

Intelligence is a delicate business. Persons with knowledge of its secrets must be discreet to the extreme.

They must never succumb to the temptation to talk just a little too much in order to make a political point.

Or, to borrow a phrase made popular by one of the President's former aids, we would "sleep better" if Sen. Fulbright or certain other members of the Foreign Relations Committee did not have access to the secrets of the CIA.